

First international P2P session held, making U.S. foreign policy, USIP event, Our Focus & media review

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Washington, DC | Islamabad, Pakistan | April, 29, 2017

INDUS Hosts First Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Session

INDUS - Mobilizing People's Power, with [Mashal-e-Rah](#) and in collaboration with [AdvoPak](#), convened the first international Peer-to-Peer (P2P) virtual session on Saturday, April 29, 2017, in Bethesda, Maryland. The P2P conference connected Pakistani college and university students in Islamabad with U.S. and Pakistani-American professionals and scholars for a discussion on youth leadership development in Pakistan. Participants identified problems concerning the youth in Pakistan and how to address those problems and move forward.

It was the first in a series of P2P events under the INDUS "Youth Leadership Development Program."



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The making of US foreign policy

Touqir Hussain

US foreign policy is hard to understand, especially if you do not have adequate knowledge of America's origins and history, political system, its capitalist mindset and strong sense of individualism, that all make it a unique society. Not just foreign policy, everything that America does is different or it does in a different way; or at least it appears different.

This is not an essay on the American society or an all-embracing review of the US foreign policy that would be far beyond the scope of this article. It is just a snapshot of the process of the making of US foreign policy and the formative influences that impact its substance.

It is the foreign policy of a highly open society with a powerful media and advanced civil society that demands answers. The government is thus having to explain its policies all the time, often informing but not revealing. It is also the foreign policy of a highly complex and in many ways unique democracy under constant stress of domestic politics. That means the government saying different things to different audiences, sending mixed fixed signals among the American public as well as people abroad.

Adding to the welter of confusion is the media's approach to foreign affairs specially that of the 24/7 electronic media. The way it plays on foreign policy issues has created its own distortions. The social media which has made everybody an instant expert on foreign policy has made things worse — opinion

is moving faster than knowledge. The net result is that foreign affairs have become action drama and the traditionally uninformed American public has become grossly misinformed and behaves as if it has become a protagonist in a conflict. And wants its voice to be heard which a politician cannot ignore because of its impact on his electoral prospects.

There are also multiple systemic issues in the US foreign policy. The administration has to satisfy, specially on issues of critical national importance or of high public interest or both, different centres of power and bureaucratic institutions, like Congress, the Pentagon, and the CIA and various lobbies and special interests. The challenge is how to synthesize differing points of view.

In making a policy the president thus has to resolve the constant tussle between the electoral compulsions on the one hand and strategic imperatives on the other, and between America's own interests that are global and those of its allies that are local and regional. Of particular importance are the tensions between public interest and national interest. The greater the public interest and its impact on politics harder it is to make policy especially if there is no consensus. Frankly, the consensus has broken down on many issues because of polarised politics and media's influence. Syria is a case in point where it has been difficult to align public opinion, politics and policy. So you either end up with no action as by Obama or adhoc action by Trump.

These are indeed the challenges of making public policy in in an advanced democracy but more so in the complex American system. Issues do not live only at the level of foreign policy. There is an issue and there is a politics of the issue. Ask yourself if it is a policy statement or a political statement. Otherwise you will make the mistake of picking one fragment of a remark by an official or a politician, and start reading a huge meaning into it. Trump's tweets for instance are political, not policy statements.

Now the substance of the policy. The US does command an immense array of diplomatic, economic and political assets and military power. To its credit, it has played a decisive role in international affairs specially in the last century maintaining some semblance of balance of power and international order and stability. But there has been an obvious discrepancy between America's claims of a moralist foreign policy and the practice of a policy whose substance is not markedly different from the traditional power politics of any great power.

There have been thus great success stories in US foreign policy but failures as well. America has done very well in purely economic and military challenges such as the two World Wars. It has also done well in dealing with other big powers despite the fact that they all have now risen and become competing powers. But it would be wrong to say America is in decline. It is just that other powers have come up challenging America's primacy in the world.

Now where have been the failures? The reality is America does not do well in crises which are not entirely military and where you need to understand the internal dynamics of another society (Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya in modern times and Vietnam in the past are examples). America generally fails here because the basic approach is mechanistic, practical and impatient. There is an over-reliance on military power and money.

Washington also has had another problem area of foreign policy. It has had a varying degree of trouble either with the government or the people in two groups. That has included authoritarian regimes mainly from resource-rich countries who have needed Washington's help in staying in power. Or, countries who needed economic and military assistance because of insecurity and poor governance.

Essentially in these countries Washington related only with the elite and tried to buy friendships with money in advancement of its economic and strategic interests. It worked up to a point but is having problems as the elite-based system is under challenge now. Populations whose political self-consciousness has risen because of the new global forces are discovering that it has been a bad bargain. And this challenge is coming from two opposing forces — of democratisation and nationalism on the one hand and religious extremism on the other. And oddly they often converge on one point — anti-Americanism.

US relations with many of these countries are now troubled. But people there wrongly rely on conspiracy theories to explain what has happened. The plain truth is if American actions have caused them problems it is not due to any malice or some grand design to create chaos and instability. No. America has had bad partners in these countries and has pursued flawed policies in which the complex policymaking process where politics, ideology and corporate interests, especially of the military-industrial complex often trump strategy, has made no small contribution.

Touqir Hussain, a former Ambassador of Pakistan and Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister, teaches at Johns Hopkins and Georgetown University. He is an INDUS Founding Charter Member and a Member of the INDUS Academia Panel.

Originally published in [The Express Tribune on April 18, 2017](#).

Extremism in South Asia: new Ways to Respond?

Options for Thwarting Extremist Groups across the Region

INDUS attended an event at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, on April 24, 2017. Scott Worden, USIP Director, Afghanistan and Central Asia Programs, moderated a discussion among experts on extremists groups in South Asia. From the Taliban in Afghanistan to Buddhist extremists in Sri Lanka, the panel discussed emerging trends in extremism across the region, how it impacts states internally, and how those governments and the United States should respond..

Ali Mohammad Ali, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, discussed the internal dynamics of Afghanistan. Since the death of Mullah Omar, the Taliban in the south and the aligned forces in the north have shared the common goal of overthrowing the Afghan government, but they have entirely different political interests and illegal economies to support. There are different terrorist groups operating in the country, including ISIS, Al Qaeda, IEU, ETIM, and others. Also, Russia, China, Iran, and Pakistan are involved in the country and, to varying degrees, are seeking to effect their interests and use the insurgents as their clients. At the nexus of these groups is Afghanistan and its U.S.-backed government. Against this background, peace and reconciliation will be un-achievable without the insurgency first being broken.

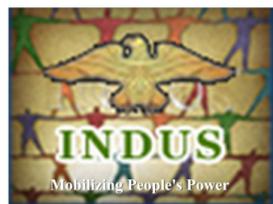
Kamran Bokhari, Director of Political Affairs, Center for Global Policy, said South Asia was home to fragmented and various extremist groups and various forms of extremism, a portion of which is the result of conservative religious ideology emanating from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. States bring this upon themselves when they claim to be a nation of a specific religious ideology; it spurs political competition among factions to be the best representative of a pure religious political orthodoxy. Bokhari said the education system needs to be addressed to correct this course and the conundrum between Hate Speech vs. Open Debate needs to be bridged, citing Mashal Khan as an example. He noted that extremism in India is feeding extremism in Pakistan, and this dynamic creates a vicious cycle.

Iman Malik, Consultant, World Bank Group, revisited the origins of ISIS thinking, which originated in the Middle East and has since spread to South Asia and elsewhere; a primary component of which is Anti-Shi'ism as well as the romanticism of the Caliphate by common people across the primarily Muslim regions of South Asia.

Susan Hayward, Senior Advisor, Religion & Inclusive Societies, U.S. Institute of Peace, discussed the extremist groups in Buddhist majority countries, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and the persecution of Muslim minority groups there. She noted that there were, however, inter- and intra-state discussions taking place between groups and governments to address frameworks for preserving a Buddhist majority culture and respecting local minority groups.

During the Q&A Session, in response to a question from an Afghan audience member, the panel agreed that greater focus needs to be on the youth of the countries in question and their education.

More information on the event is [available here](#).



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Youth Leadership Development

Creating campus-based, strictly nonpolitical Student Government Associations that offer Executive, Legislative & Judiciary functions experience within the campus environment. Elected student representatives, as Members of Parliament, Senators and judges manage all aspects of student affairs, in conjunction with campus administration.

Pakistan Civil Liberties Union

Civil liberties are personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge, either by law or by judicial interpretation. However in today's Pakistan, rising violence, intolerance, weak rule of law, endemic corruption, lack of social and economic justice, and religious freedom, social exclusion of the vulnerable and the marginalized are a common phenomenon that the people of Pakistan face on a daily basis. Pakistan Civil Liberties Union – PCLU is a watchdog organization intended to combat all the above issues at every cross section of our society.

Community Integration & Civic Promotion

When successful, the processes of community integration and civic promotion begin with the individual and, alongside support from Federal, State, and municipal programs, advance collectively, often through socialization with informal groups and professional and cultural associations. However, due to regional, organizational, and programmatic differences, the catalytic potential of civil society organizations is underutilized. Partnerships with local, regional, and national civil society organizations will advance community integration, promote the concept of citizenship, and highlight pathways to achieve the "American Dream."

Policy Research – As It Happens

Campus-based political and social sciences research. Graduate Student and Faculty focusing on policy issues for possible social, cultural, and political reform, followed by advocacy action and awareness creation by the same researchers for the purposes of legislative reform as appropriate.

Cultivating Early Awareness

Aimed at increasing youngsters' awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and building a national bond at a very impressionable age, leading to real benefits to the nation in evolving future leadership.

MEDIA REVIEW

Pakistan's prime minister, having survived Supreme Court corruption ruling, now faces pressure to step down

Pamela Constable

Pakistan's Supreme Court ruling allowed PM Sharif to remain in office while a task force is formed

to investigate his family's finances in connection to the Panama Papers case. PTI head, Imran Khan, and others are demanding Sharif step down, saying he has lost the moral authority to lead the government. Sharif has made no public statements since the ruling, and an aide to the PM denounce the verdict as a witch hunt. [[Washington Post](#)]

Tariq Fatemi rejects inquiry committee allegations against him in farewell letter

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi rejected allegations levelled against him in connection with the inquiry into a story reported last year in Dawn, a Pakistani daily. After PM Sharif issued directives for Fatemi's removal, Inter-Services Public Relations said the Army rejected the notification, saying it was not in line with the recommendations of a related committee. The government formed the committee last year to probe a story detailing a high-level civil-military meeting discussing the issue of banned outfits operating in Pakistan. [[Dawn](#)]

Pakistani-American Co-Founders Sell Tech Startup Viptela to Cisco For \$610 million

Riaz Haq

Cisco is paying \$610 million to acquire Viptela, a software-defined-networks (SDN) start-up in Silicon Valley that was co-founded in 2012 by Pakistani-American entrepreneurs Amir Khan, Atif Khan and Khalid Raza. SDN technology allows network managers to configure, manage, secure, and optimize network resources quickly as needed via dynamic, automated SDN programs. [[Haq's Musings](#)]

Why they lynched Mashal Khan

Pervez Hoodbhoy

The actions surrounding the murder of Mashal Khan "suggest that much of the Pakistani public, whether tacitly or openly, endorses violent punishment of suspected blasphemers." Two reasons are frequently offered as explanation: the blasphemy law allows for such behavior, and, the courts act too slowly against blasphemers. Both claims "are farcical." Rather it is a consequence of biology and sociology -- group-think and deadly memes. But "a robust defence can be built by educating people into the spirit of critical inquiry." [[Dawn](#)]

A second Eden

F.S. Aijazuddin

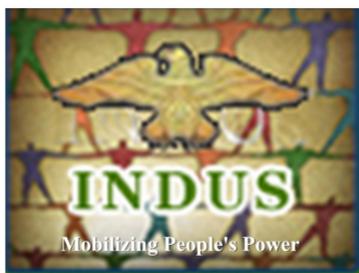
The countless books and articles written about the Jammu & Kashmir contain a recurring truth, one Milton articulated: Who overcomes/By force, hath overcome but half his foe. "The very length of this dispute should shame the two governments into a mature, sober reconsideration of their positions." [[Dawn](#)]

Jinnah Institute's Policy Dialogue on Counter Narratives to Terrorism

On April 14, a panel at the Jinnah Institute addressed the systemic and root causes of extremism in South Asia and ways to combat them. Recommendations included forming youth-led national narratives that learn from past mistakes, greater regional connectivity, and unwinding the myth that there is a connection between freedom-fighting and terrorism. "The panel concluded by advocating for public education that promotes democracy and recognizes that citizens of Pakistan have different identities based on different religions, sects and ethnicity." [[Jinnah Institute](#)]

As always, thank you for reading, and thank you for your efforts. If you have questions or comments, or desire to participate in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us at induspk.usa@gmail.com.

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